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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000275

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NDJAMENA FOR TIERNAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/20/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [CM](#)

SUBJECT: (S) ALLEGED PLOT TO KILL BIYA "PLAUSIBLE, BUT UNLIKELY" SAYS JUSTICE MINISTER

REF: A. LIBREVILLE 104

[B](#). YAOUNDE 256

[C](#). IIR 5 505 0033 09

[D](#). 07 YAOUNDE 1315

[E](#). 07 YAOUNDE 1235

Classified By: Political Officer Tad Brown for reasons 1.4 b and d.

[1](#). (S) Summary. According to Francis Dooh Collins, a French national of Cameroonian origin who has proven to be politically well-connected but of dubious credibility, Minister of Defense Remy Ze Meka and a group of disgruntled senior military officials intend to assassinate President Paul Biya during the weekend of March 21-22. Dooh Collins called Poloff March 19 and 20 claiming to have reviewed telephone intercepts indicating Ze Meka planned to kill Biya with an attack on Biya's convoy as he traveled to or from the Presidential palace in Yaounde. On March 20, Poloff and DAO briefed Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Amadou Ali, who Collins said he had tried unsuccessfully to contact. Ali said Ze Meka and other members of Biya's ethnic group posed a real and immediate threat to Biya, but Ali admitted he was unaware of Dooh Collins' allegations and did not believe an attack would happen this weekend. End summary.

[2](#). (S) Dooh Collins, a shadowy figure with remarkable access and connections in Cameroon and across Africa (ref e), telephoned Poloff on the evening of March 19, saying he wanted to alert the Embassy that Minister of Defense Ze Meka planned an attack "in Yaounde on Saturday or Sunday." Dooh Collins said Biya and some Government of Cameroon (GRC) officials were aware of the situation and he promised to call Poloff back to provide further information, which he did on March 20.

[3](#). (S) Claiming he obtained the information from telephone intercepts of Ze Meka's phone conversations, Dooh Collins said Ze Meka planned to attack Biya during the weekend of March 21 and 22. Dooh Collins said Ze Meka and a group of senior military officials were angered that Biya's recent decision to shift responsibility and resources from the regular military to the Rapid Interventions Battalions (BIR) would cost them substantial portions of their budget (ref c). (Note. Biya recently decided to shift responsibility to the BIR because the regular military had been decimated by Ze Meka's corruption and that of other senior military officials. Biya has more faith in the BIR, which is commanded by Israeli national Colonel (Ret) Abraham Sivan, who reports directly to Biya. End Note.)

[4](#). (S) Dooh Collins said Ze Meka was backed by Akame

Mfoumou, a powerful former Minister of Finance and member of Biya's own Bulu ethnic group. Dooh Collins said he had briefed Sivan and Rene Sadi, the Deputy Secretary General at the Presidency, and that Sadi had convened an emergency meeting and put Presidential Security forces on alert. Dooh Collins speculated that Ze Meka would attack Biya while he was traveling to or from the Presidency in either a motorcade or helicopter. Dooh Collins noted that Biya could be expected to attend the funeral services for the recently deceased wife of Gabonese President Omar Bongo (ref a). (Note. Biya did not travel to the state funeral, which was held March 19 in Libreville. Post does not know if Biya intends to attend a ceremony in Congo (Brazzaville) scheduled for March 22. End note.)

15. (S) Not wanting to add credibility to Dooh Collins' claims, Ambassador sent Poloff and DAO to meet with Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Amadou Ali, who, from previous experience, shares Post's reservations about Dooh Collins' credibility (ref e). Ali thanked Emboffs for coming to him with the information, saying he knew Dooh Collins was trying unsuccessfully to reach him while he (with the rest of the GRC's senior leadership) had been occupied with official ceremonies related to the visit of the Pope, who departed Cameroon around 10:30 on March 20.

16. (S) Ali, who served as Cameroon's Minister of Defense from 1997-2001, said he believed it was "entirely possible" that Ze Meka would undertake such an attack, but noted that he was unaware of any information that an attack was imminent and had not seen any sign that GRC security forces were

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reacting to such a threat. Ali said he had personally and repeatedly warned Biya that members of Biya's own Bulu ethnic group, including Ze Meka and Mfoumou, posed a serious and immediate threat to Biya because they felt Biya would not sufficiently protect their interests in determining his own succession (ref b).

17. (S) Ali cautioned that Dooh Collins was a "loud-mouth, chatty, self-promoter," but admitted that Dooh Collins had proven relationships with powerful and influential people in Cameroon and internationally. Ali said he believed Dooh Collins was connected to Adolphe Moudiki, the powerful General Manager of the National Hydrocarbons Company (SNH), and to members of the Israeli intelligence community. Ali said he would delicately try to determine if other GRC officials were cognizant of and concerned by the claims, but told Emboffs: "I have an internal compass about these things in Cameroon, and right now my compass tells me that this is not going to happen this weekend."

18. (S) DAO spoke with a member of Sivan's staff who said that Sivan is currently out of Yaounde on routine business and is not aware of any pressing security concerns.

Comment: Don't Trust, But Verify  
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19. (S) We have learned to take Dooh Collins' claims with a healthy dose of skepticism. Despite making often outlandish and outright false statements, Dooh Collins does have significant connections in and out of Cameroon. Some of his previous claims--most notably his report in 2007 that Ze Meka concocted a coup plot to frame Ali (ref d)--have proven accurate, and we share Ali's hesitancy to ignore Dooh Collins completely. We have no independent substantiation of Dooh Collins' allegation and we are wary of repeating them to our contacts for fear of lending them credibility and associating ourselves with Dooh Collins.

110. (S) That Sivan has not been alerted and called back to Yaounde suggests that the threat, if it exists, is not being taken too seriously by Biya or his security team (and further undermines Dooh Collins' credibility). The mere fact that

Ali was willing to openly entertain the possibility that the Minister of Defense would assassinate the President in the coming days is, in itself, indicative; even Cameroon's most powerful leaders are gripped with uncertainty and anxiety about the transition beyond the 26-year reign of President Biya.

GARVEY